

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

**CASTLE BROMWICH HALL**

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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**CASTLE BROMWICH HALL**

Name: CASTLE BROMWICH HALL

District: Birmingham (Metropolitan Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

District: Solihull (Metropolitan Authority)

Parish: Castle Bromwich

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.505403  
Longitude: -1.7931549  
National Grid Reference: SP 14137 89743  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1000118  
Date first listed: 01-Jul-1986

## Details

Formal gardens of c 1680-1740 with elements by William Winde and George London associated with a country house. Restorations in later C19 and early C20, and from 1985.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Castle Bromwich was purchased in 1572 by Sir Edward Devereux from his nephew, Walter Devereux, first Earl of Essex, although not until 1599, on his mother's death, did he come into full possession of the manor. The present Hall was begun at about that time, surrounded by formal gardens. In 1657 the estate was sold to Sir John Bridgeman (1631-1710), the eldest son of Sir Orlando Bridgeman (1608-74), whose eminent legal career culminated with his appointment in 1667 as Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. From c 1685 Sir John and his wife Mary (1641-1714) made major changes to the Hall and its gardens with the guidance of Sir John's cousin, the gentleman architect Captain William Winde. Under their son Sir John II (d 1747) the gardens were extended westwards; in 1726, when near their zenith, the Hall and its surrounds were engraved by Henry Beighton. In 1762 John II's son Sir Orlando Bridgeman (1695-1764), who had married Ann Newport (d 1752), inherited the Newport estate at Weston Park (Staffs, qv). The Bridgemans immediately moved there, and until c 1820 the Hall was rented out. After the family returned to Castle Bromwich the old gardens were retained, and under Lady Ida Bridgeman (1848-1936) there was much new gardening within the old framework. In 1947 Viscount Newport gave restrictive covenant over the site to the National Trust, and in 1985 Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens Trust was established to restore and protect the by then much neglected and vandalised gardens. Since 1988 they have been open to the public.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Castle Bromwich Hall lies c 6km east of the centre of Birmingham, 300m south-east of Junction 5 of the M6. Immediately north-east is the old village of Castle Bromwich, while to the south are the extensive C20 housing estates of Hodgehill and Buckland End. The walled garden and registered area is bounded to the south by the B4118 Birmingham Road, with a southern extension to include the South Avenue. To the north the

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boundary line runs along the northern side of the garden, extending c 400m west of its western side up to the A452 Newport Road (leading to J6 of the M6) which forms the western boundary of the registered area. The eastern boundary follows Chester Road down the east side of the service court. The area here registered is c 18ha.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The restored gardens are approached from the north, via a short drive to the west of the parish church. The Hall and its service buildings are served principally from an entrance on the east side of the grounds. The main, formal approach to the Hall was and is that from the south, with gates off the Birmingham Road giving access to the forecourt and turning circle.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Castle Bromwich Hall (listed grade I) is a brick, south-facing, E-plan building of c 1599. Behind is a small court. The third storey to the principal front and the stone-faced two-storeyed porch with statues by Sir William Wilson (d 1710) were added c 1700, during the period when the interior was redecorated by leading craftsmen. The tower and kitchen block to the north-east were added in 1837-8 to designs by Thomas Rickman (d 1841). Service buildings (including a late C16 bakehouse, listed grade I) lie east of the Hall, with along the south side a stables and coach house block (listed grade II\*) of 1731. North of the service court are agricultural buildings including a Pigeon House of 1725 (listed grade II\*) and barns. Many of these buildings have been converted to commercial use.

The Hall grounds lie immediately south of the parish church St Mary and St Margaret of 1726; Thomas White (d 1748), carver and monumental mason, was among those involved in its construction. The church forms the main viewpoint from the north side of the Hall.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** To the south of the Hall is a forecourt (brick walls listed grade II) with gate piers of c 1657 and plain wrought-iron gates (listed grade II\*). Along its south side is a degraded raised walk. In 1726 there was a warrior statue in the middle of the turning circle and other statues around the porch.

North of the Hall, and between it and the church, is the North Garden, in the later C20 laid to lawn but in the early C18 laid to parterres. Overgrown yew hedges, some now cut back and replanted, run around its edge. In the centre of the north side, on the main axial path from the centre of the north side of the Hall, is an impressive C18 gateway giving access to the churchyard. Its tall iron gates (restored 1995) hang on brick piers with seat niches.

The main formal gardens lie about an east/west axis extending 180m west from the centre of the west side of the Hall. They are surrounded by a tall brick wall. The north-west and south-west piers contain niches or seats, and are surmounted by restored sphinx-like beasts, poems to the qualities of which are carved on the supporting plinths. In width the gardens splay slightly outwards to the south, from 145m on a line across the west face of the Hall to 180m along the west wall. At the south-east corner of the formal garden the brick footings of an C18 summerhouse have been uncovered by excavations.

Against the centre of the west side of the Hall is the Best Garden, c 65m north/south by 50m east/west, now lawn with four large, C19 style rose beds. In the early C18 the main east/west axial path ran up the centre of the lawn, with parterres with topiary to either side. Flanking the Hall, and on the north and south sides of the garden, are 3.5m tall brick walls of the early C18. Piercing the north wall, at its west end, is a doorway leading into a brick-built Cold Bath of 1733, later used as a store room. The Cold Bath projects north into the compartment along the north side of the Best Garden, which since the C19 has been called the Greenhouse Garden. Along the south side of this, and abutting the Cold Bath, are the foundations of potting sheds. They would have been largely screened from the Greenhouse Garden by a line of pleached hornbeams, still extant. In the 1990s the garden was mainly used as a nursery, and some C19 cold frames survived in its north-east section. Mirroring the Greenhouse Garden to the south of the Best Garden is the former Soft Fruit Garden, now used as a car park.

At the centre of the west side of the Best Garden is a flight of C19 steps (listed grade II). These lead down to the main axial path west through the principal formal garden, although in 1997 metal security palisading, here screened by leylandii, around the Hall grounds prevented access. At the bottom of the steps, running north/south across the east side of the formal garden, is the North Terrace walk. To its west, and either side of the axial path, is the 50m wide Upper Wilderness. This retains some C19 specimen trees although most of the area was replanted with shrubs in the 1990s. Down the west side of the Upper Wilderness is the Archery Ground lawn, c 20m wide.

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Running west of the Archery Ground is the main north/south axis across the garden, the 170m long Holly Walk, a gravel path with variegated holly hedges to either side created in 1721 and replanted in the 1990s. At the north end is the Orangery of 1729, which in C18 estate accounts is referred to as the Summer House. This faces the Music Room at the south end of the Walk, built about the same time as the Orangery. Both are brick buildings with glazed central doors, windows to either side, rusticated quoins, and elaborately carved pediments with the Bridgeman crest.

West of the Holly Walk the main east/west axial path continues for a further 50m to the Look Out, a clairvoie through the west wall with a niche to either side. This gives a vista down the west avenue. To either side of the path is the Lower Wilderness, which occupies the central part of the western compartment of the main garden; to either side of the Lower Wilderness, taking up the north-west and south-west corners of the garden, are kitchen gardens. Between the South Kitchen Garden, replanted in the later 1990s to a plan by Batty Langley (d 1751), and the Lower Wilderness is a rectangular Holly Maze. Replanted in the 1990s, the maze was apparently based on that at Hampton Court and was possibly designed in the early C18 by George London. A slip runs around the outside of the north, west and part of the south sides of the garden, separated by the C20 metal security palisading from the park beyond. In the north slip, east of the Orangery, is the brick-walled Melon Ground, on the west side of which are garden sheds. In the west slip, bounded by a brick wall, are the remains of three ponds. That (with demi-lune ends) in the centre carries on the line of the main east/west axial path and links it with the west avenue. Simpler ponds originally lay at either end of the slip; by 1997 only that to the north had been restored. The southern half of the west slip contains the New Orchard planted in the early C18 and replanted c 1990. C19 Scots pines occupy the slip along the south side of the garden.

A lengthy correspondence of 1685-1703 survives between William Winde (c 1645-1722) and Lady Mary Bridgeman discussing the changes to be made at Castle Bromwich. In 1698 Winde provided designs for the North Garden and for the Best Garden with an added Lower Court. He also advised on the layout of a wilderness, an orchard, a grove, walks and parterres, and recommended suitable planting and garden building works. Winde also acted as agent for the family, recommending leading practitioners where he was himself unable to provide the relevant services. Through him in 1699 Captain Charles Hatton (1635 - c 1705), the brother of Christopher Hatton of Kirby Hall (Northants, qv), supplied a very detailed planting list for the Wilderness (where evergreens were combined with flowering shrubs), while two years later George London (d 1714) provided two alternative designs for a parterre in the Best Garden. Winde also consulted, in 1703, with the leading sculptors John van Nost (fl 1686-1710), Richard Osgood (fl 1691-1715), William Larson and Caius Gabriel Cibber (1630-1700) about statuary for the garden, and van Nost later supplied at least five figures. Extensions and additions to the garden after 1710 included the west wall, the Holly Walk and New Orchard, the Cold Bath, the Coach House, Orangery and Music Room, and three ponds outside the west wall. Two more clairvoies were added, making six in all. It is possible that Thomas White (1674-1748) of Worcester, who was then working on Castle Bromwich church, contributed to these works.

After the Bridgemans moved away in 1762 the gardens at Castle Bromwich escaped radical changes, although in 1775 Sir Henry Bridgeman (1725-1800) ordered the removal of yew trees from the Wilderness, the stripping of hedges, and the removal of most of the statues, some to Weston and some to the countryside around Castle Bromwich. On the family's return in the 1820s large numbers of shrubs were planted in the Upper and Lower Wilderness areas (by then already referred to as shrubberies). After Lady Ida Bridgeman moved to the Hall in 1870 the parterres were given new bedding, shrubs were planted in the Lower Wilderness and hedges replanted.

The restoration programme which began in the 1980s involved both extensive repairs to the garden walls and structures and large-scale replanting. It was preceded by archaeological investigations.

**PARK** The Hall lay within a park, and a roughly circular area of rough grassland, falling away to Newport Road 400m to the west, still survives. A West Avenue, replanted in 1895 with horse chestnut trees and now in poor condition, continues the line of the garden's main east/west axial path westwards across its centre. More impressive is the South Avenue, which runs from the main gates into the forecourt for some 650m, bisected midway by Bradford Road. The north section of that avenue is again horse chestnuts of 1895, although the southern section, running downhill as a corridor through the Buckland End housing estate, is of mature oaks. Running down Rectory Lane, continuing the east/west axis of the church, are mature limes, which

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may be regarded as an east avenue. Two variegated sycamores west of the church are apparently (gardener, pers comm) the last survivors of a north avenue.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 8 (4 August 1900), pp 144-51; 32 (17 August 1912), pp 228-35; 111 (9 May 1952), pp 1408-11 Architectural History 27, (1984), pp 150-9 and pls N Stockton, Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens (1988) M Batey and D Lambert, The English Garden Tour (1990), pp 100-3. Garden History 19.1, (1991), pp 77-99 Post-Medieval Archaeology 27, (1993), pp 111-99, 201-4 Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1904 3rd edition published 1916 1937 edition Description written: March 1999 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: October 1999

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.